

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6814

USMISSION USBERLIN IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 03349

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, GW, WB, FR, US, UK, UR

SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER MEETINGS OF COUNCIL OF
ELDERS AND PRESIDUM IN BERLIN

REFS: (A) BONN 3283; (B) BONN 3265

SUMMARY: IN FEB. 27 PRESS CONFERENCE FRG DEPUTY PRESS
SPOKESMAN SAID THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS INVOLVED IN
THE BUNDESTAG PRESIDUM/COUNCIL OF ELDERS MATTER ONLY AS
AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT RENGEL AND
THE THREE ALLIES. HE SAID THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS
NEVER EXPRESSED A VIEW ON THE MATTER. ALLIES HAVE
DEVELOPED CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN REGULARLY SCHEDULED FEB. 27 PRESS CONFERENCE
FRG DEPUTY PRESS SPOKESMAN GRUENEWALD RESPONDED TO
QUESTIONS RE POSSIBLE MEETINGS IN BERLIN (SEE REFTELS)
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OF BUNDESTAG COUNCIL OF ELDERS AND PRESIDUM BY SAYING

THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD NOT EXPRESSED ANY OPINION ON THIS MATTER SINCE THE FRG IS NOT A SIGNATORY STATE OF THE QA AND CONSEQUENTLY DOES NOT INTERPRET IT TO ANY BODY. GRUENEWALD SAID THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BECAME INVOLVED SIMPLY AS AN INTERMEDIARY IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE VIEWS OF THE THREE POWERS FOR BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT RENGEL, WHICH HAD BEEN DONE. GRUENEWALD STATED: "SINCE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ENTERED INTO THIS ONLY AS AN INTERMEDIARY, BETWEEN THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG, I DO NOT CONSIDER MYSELF ABLE TO SET OUT THE POSITIONS OF THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES, AND, IF I DID, I WOULD BE EXCEEDING MY COMPETENCE."

2. RESPONDING TO A SPECIFIC QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD EXPRESSED A VIEW ON THIS MATTER IN THE BONN GROUP, GRUENEWALD SAID: "TO MY KNOWLEDGE, NO. RATHER, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OBTAINED THE VIEW OF THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES. IN THIS CASE THAT IS WHAT THE PRESIDUM (SIC) OF THE BUNDESTAG WANTED."

3. GRUENEWALD EMPHATICALLY DISAGREED THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN ASKED FOR AN INTERPRETATION OF THE QA; HE SAID THE POSITION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON THE QUESTION OF INTERPRETING THE QA WAS OBVIOUSLY KNOWN TO THE PRESS SINCE THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN IN THE PAST HAD REPEATEDLY DECLARED "THAT IT IS THE BASIC POSITION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT NOT TO INTERPRET THE QA. CONSEQUENTLY I WOULD NOT LIKE TO EXPRESS A VIEW ON THIS SINCE IT COULD LEAD TO THE SUSPICION THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS WEAKENING THE POSITION IT HAS HELD ON THIS UP TO NOW, THE POSITION WHICH I HAVE JUST INDICATED TO YOU."

4 TO FURTHER QUESTIONS THE SPOKESMAN REPEATED THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AS FAR AS HE KNEW, HAD NOT BEEN ASKED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE BUNDESTAG FOR ITS OWN VIEW OR FOR ITS ADVICE, BUT HAD BEEN ASKED TO OBTAIN THE VIEW OF THE THREE WESTERN ALLIES, WHICH HAD BEEN DONE.

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5. TRIPARTITE BONN GROUP MEETING WAS HELD TO DEVELOP ALLIED PRESS LINE. FOLLOWING LINE HAS BEEN DRAFTED FOR "IF ASKED" USE BY ALLIED SPOKESMAN IN BONN (WE AND FRENCH GAVE FINAL OK WHILE UK REP IS OBTAINING OK FROM FCO):

I. Q: RE DIE WELT ALLEGATION, HAS THERE BEEN ALLIED CONSULTATIONS WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR ABRASIMOV ON THIS MATTER?

A: DISCUSSIONS OF THE THREE WITH THE SOVIETS ARE CONFIDENTIAL. HOWEVER, SINCE THERE HAVE BEEN CERTAIN ALLEGATIONS, THE THREE POWERS ARE IN A POSITION TO DENY CATEGORICALLY THAT THIS SUBJECT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED WITH SOVIET AUTHORITIES. (AS INDICATED PARA 9 REF A, THIS HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE

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BY USBER-)

II. Q: ANY TRUTH TO DIE WELT ASSERTION THAT ALLIED RESERVATIONS WERE CONTAINED IN A "GERMAN-ALLIED PROTOCOL" OF A JANUARY BONN GROUP MEETING?

A: US (UK, FRENCH) AUTHORITIES HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY SUCH DOCUMENT.

III. Q: (ANY QUESTIONS FOLLOWING UP ON OR REFERRING TO GRUENEWALD PRESS CONFERENCE OF 2/27.)

A: SPOKESMAN MAY CONFIRM THAT THE SUBJECT WAS A TOPIC OF CONSULTATION IN THE BONN GROUP. SPOKESMAN SHOULD THEN SAY THAT AS MATTER OF PRINCIPLE BONN GROUP CONSULTATIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND NOTHING MORE CAN BE SAID.

IV. Q: RE ALLIED POSITION ON SUBSTANCE OF THE MATTER?

A: AS III. ABOVE.

6. FCO ON FEB. 26 ALSO DENIED EXISTENCE OF ALLIED LETTER TO RENGEL ON PRESIDIIUM/COUNCIL OF ELDERS QUESTION. ON BACKGROUND, FCO SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT THE BONN GROUP HAD RECENTLY BEEN SEIZED OF THE MATTER BUT THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN.

7. UK REP (HITCH) AS CHAIRMAN IN BONN PASSED PRESS LINE PARA 5 ABOVE TO FRG REP AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 27. WHEN DOING SO HE EXPRESSED ALLIED SURPRISE AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT GRUENEWALD'S STATEMENT. US REP HAS ALSO EXPRESSED DISPLEASURE TO FONOFF (HENZE) AT FRG STATEMENT, WHICH SOUGHT TO ABSOLVE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FROM ANY RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPPOSING BERLIN MEETING AND SIMPLY DID NOT CONFORM WITH FACTS OF BONN GROUP CONVERSATIONS. HENZE RESPONDED TO US COLLEAGUE THAT HE UNDERSTOOD US POSITION AND WAS HIMSELF SURPRISED BY GRUENEWALD STATEMENT. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE HAD TOLD GRUENEWALD DURING MORNING OF FEBRUARY 27 THAT RESERVATIONS AGAINST MEETINGS IN BERLIN OF THE TWO BUNDESTAG BODIES HAD BEEN SHARED BY ALL FOUR BONN GROUP STATES.

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8. THE EMBASSY RECEIVED ONLY ONE PRESS INQUIRY THE MORNING OF FEBRUARY 27 (FROM AXEL SPRINGER INLANDIENST, BERLIN) -- ON WHICH WE STONEWALLED. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO INQUIRIES SINCE.

9. COMMENT: PRESS LINE PARA 5 ABOVE WAS DRAFTED IN BELIEF THAT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED BY MAKING

PUBLIC STATEMENT CONTRADICTING OR IMPLYING DIS-SATISFACTION WITH GRUENEWALD'S REMARKS. SECOND OBJECTIVE WAS TO AVOID COMMENTS ON SUBSTANCE (E.G., THAT QA DOES NOT PRECLUDE MEETINGS) THAT COULD LEAD TO PUBLIC REBUTTAL BY USSR PRESS.

10. WE HAVE ALSO BEEN MINDFUL THAT GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT WOULD ALLOW US TO ACCEPT COUNCIL OF ELDERS OR PRESIDUM MEETING IN BERLIN IF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT RENGEL DECIDED A MEETING ABSOLUTELY HAD TO BE HELD. PRESSURES FOR SUCH A MEETING ARE OBVIOUSLY GROWING, AND AN ALLIED STATEMENT THAT A MEETING WOULD NOT BE ILLEGAL WOULD PROBABLY FORCE RENGEL TO AGREE TO SCHEDULE IT. THERE IS SOME HOPE THAT IF WE LEAVE RECORD AS IT NOW STANDS THE PRESSURES MAY DISSIPATE; THE ALLIES AND NOT THE FRG ARE CHARACTERIZED AS THE NAY-SAYERS. WE BELIEVE IT IS THUS BEST TO SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE. IN BONN GROUP

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SCHEDULED FOR EARLY NEXT WEEK WE WILL PRESS FOR INFORMATION ON BONN'S INTENTIONS RE MEETINGS.

-1. WHILE SOVIETS HAVE NOT YET BEEN HEARD FROM IN BERLIN, SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR POPOV, WHO FOLLOWS BERLIN MATTERS IN BONN, ASKED EMBOFF, AT PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED LUNCHEON FEBRUARY 26, ABOUT PRESIDIUM/ COUNCIL OF ELDERS STORY IN THAT MORNING'S "DIE WELT." EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT THERE WAS NO TRUTH TO "DIE WELT" STORY OF EXCHANGE OF LETTERS BETWEEN FRAU RENGER AND THE ALLIES AND THAT THERE WAS NOT CURRENTLY A PROPOSAL BEFORE THE ALLIES FOR A MEETING IN BERLIN. EMBOFF ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IF QUESTION SHOULD ARISE THE ALLIED ATTITUDE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE THE SAME AS WAS CONVEYED IN MOSCOW IN APRIL 1974 -- I.E., THAT WE DID NOT SHARE THE SOVIET VIEW THAT SUCH MEETINGS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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BERLIN WOULD BE CONTRARY TO THE QA. POPOV SAID THAT SOVIETS DISAGREED AND THAT, EVEN THOUGH THE QA DID NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTION THE PRESIDIUM OR THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS, THERE WAS A GENERAL PROVISION IN THE QA -- HE WAS UNABLE TO SPECIFY WHICH ONE -- WHICH WOULD PROHIBIT SUCH MEETINGS.

12. AS FOR PRESENT PRESS CONTROVERSY, WITHOUT DEPRECIATING SERIOUSNESS OF MATTER, WE FEAR THE ALLIES ARE GOING TO HAVE TO BE RATHER STOICAL BETWEEN NOW AND FRG NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER. BERLIN HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ISSUE ON WHICH FRG POLITICOS HAVE HAD TO PROVE THEIR LOYALTY, AND THIS WILL BE THE CASE IN SPADES THIS YEAR. THE GOVERNMENT PRESUMABLY FEELS RATHER VULNERABLE ON OSTPOLITIK, AND WE HAVE THE FEELING THAT SCHMIDT IS NOT ABOUT TO BE OUTFLANKED BY THE OPPOSITION ON BERLIN. IT THUS WOULD NOT SURPRISE US IF THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED ITSELF VIRTUALLY FORCED INTO INITIATIVES ON BERLIN BETWEEN NOW AND OCTOBER. END COMMENT. HILLENBRAND

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